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ABSTRACT

Community colleges have the students, support services, and articulation mechanisms in place to play a critical role in the development of a multi-ethnic teaching force. This Digest examines the demand for an ethnically diverse teaching force and the possible sources of supply for that force. The role of the community colleges in recruiting and training are discussed as well as some strategies they might employ for realizing their potential in recruiting and retaining promising students. (JD)

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THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN THE CREATION OF A MULTI-ETHNIC TEACHING FORCE

ERIC Digest 11-88

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CLEARINGHOUSE ON TEACHER EDUCATION

ERIC DIGEST

EDO-SP 11-88

The Role of the Community College in the Creation of a Multi-Ethnic Teaching Force

To increase the number of qualified teachers with backgrounds reflective of the ethnic and racial diversity of their students, fundamental changes in the recruitment processes used for teacher education will be required. Community colleges have the students, support services, and articulation mechanisms in place to play a critical role in the development of a multi-ethnic teaching force. However, the potential contributions of the community college sector must be integrated into a sequence of recruitment, retention, training, and job placement efforts involving all segments of higher education.

Teacher Supply and Demand

The challenge to maintain a sufficiently large, ethnically diverse, and well-trained teaching force is complicated by a number of factors. Less than 8 percent of first-time college freshmen in 1985 indicated an interest in teaching careers (Tucker, 1985) and a 1984 study found that only 68 percent of the working college graduates certified to teach were actually engaged in teaching. Among those who did not enter the profession, 16.8 percent had received a better job offer and 12 percent were deterred by the low pay and poor working conditions (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1987).

The problem is further compounded by the shortage of minority teachers. Although recent research (AACTE, 1988) indicates an increase in the number of students entering teacher education, less than 10 percent are members of minority groups. Blacks comprise approximately 6.9 percent of the teaching force, while Hispanics and other minorities comprise another 3.5 percent of the profession (Woods and Williams, 1987). On the other hand, minority student K-12 enrollments continue to grow rapidly representing nearly 30 percent of the school-age population (OERI, 1987).

It appears that new ways of recruiting and preparing minorities outside of the traditional, university-based teacher education programs must be developed. Partnerships between two- and four-year colleges addressing recruitment and preparation issues are one viable alternative.

The Community College's Role in Recruitment and Training

Two-year community colleges represent an ideal place to encourage minority students to enter teaching occupations. These institutions enroll 54 percent of all Hispanics and 45 percent of all Blacks currently pursuing higher education in the United States. In addition, community colleges enroll a great many older students who are preparing for a career change. The coming teacher shortage will demand that recruitment efforts extend beyond traditionally-aged college students (Woods and Williams, 1987).

Since many students enter community colleges with unstable or unclear academic or career goals (Shavelson et al., 1983), community college career counseling and academic advisement services can be particularly influential in promoting the teaching career option. Further, community colleges' general education curriculum, work experience programs, remedial studies, and student development activities provide a good beginning for the systematic provision of undergraduate teacher education.

Strategies for Community College Involvement

In order for community colleges to realize their potential in recruiting and training minority students for teaching, two problems that plague many community colleges must be overcome: high rates of student attrition, especially among minority students, and low rates of successful transfer to four-year colleges. Strategies for addressing these problems focus in three areas: student services, curriculum, and articulation.

Student services provide the framework for the development of the student outside of the classroom. Services that are particularly relevant to the recruitment and retention of minority students include assessment of skills and interests, internship opportunities, and the provision of role models and mentors. Of particular importance are adequate financial aid information and streamlined financial aid procedures.

Although the general education curriculum at community colleges is designed to provide the background needed by students to pursue any field of study, successful teacher recruitment will require some exposure to education courses during the first two years of college. Students should not be expected to defer taking courses that will further their career goals until they reach the upper-level university (Haberman, 1988).

The issue of articulation between two- and four-year colleges is related to the broader issue of the effectiveness of the community college transfer function. In Florida, where higher education articulation is state-mandated and controlled, approximately 49 percent of the state university students enrolled in teacher training programs attended a community college (Beck et al., 1985). Elsewhere, agreements between individual two- and four-year colleges ensure that equivalent courses taught at the two- and four-year college levels have common prerequisites, content, and credit value. Transfer and degree achievement are also facilitated by dual admissions programs, whereby students gain admission to university teacher training programs while continuing their enrollment at a community college.

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Examples of Working Relationships

To realize the full potential of community colleges for developing multi-ethnic teachers, their efforts must be integrated with all segments of higher education as the following examples demonstrate. Woods and Williams (1987) highlight projects in which community colleges are collaborating with other agencies to prepare minority teachers:

Minority Teacher Preparation Program

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater has developed a program to increase the number of minority students eligible for teacher certification and teaching positions in the state by improving the rate of transfer of minority students and their successful completion of teacher education programs. A cooperative agreement between the colleges outlines their commitment to assisting two-year college students interested in teaching to complete the associate degree; intensifying academic and financial support for these students; coordinating the transfer of academic courses to UWW; concurrently admitting teacher education majors to both institutions; and promoting student interactions with successful minority teachers and administrators.

SELECT

The Search for Excellent Leaders to Enter Careers in Teaching (SELECT) program is a three-way collaboration between White Plains public schools, Westchester Community College, and Pace University in New York. Recruitment efforts are focused not only on college-bound high school students and community college students, but also on adults seeking mid-life career changes. The project features a team-taught course entitled, "Introduction to Schools and Teaching," which is offered through the collaboration of Westchester Community College and Pace University.

Mini-corps (1989)

Mini-corps is a federally funded program designed to recruit and train students with migrant worker backgrounds to become bilingual teachers. The project was initiated in Porterville, California, to give students an opportunity to explore the field of teaching first hand. The program works closely with area high schools and senior institutions to ensure ease of transfer and to make sure adequate information is given to students interested in teaching.

Conclusions

Given that a significant number of high school graduates interested in teaching careers start their education at community colleges, and that large numbers of adults return to community colleges to prepare for career changes, two-year colleges are prime targets for any effort to recruit students into the profession. The most important elements of these efforts are a supportive college environment, dual admissions, adequate financial aid, and well-functioning articulation agreements with senior institutions. However, before these programs can be truly effective, the value placed on the teaching profession, evidenced by prestige and remuneration, must be raised to make teaching a viable career choice.

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